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## POLITICAL ACTION AND TRADE-UNIONISM

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The proposal to make political action a feature of American trade-unionism, although always a topic of discussion among organized workers, and at times a subject of practical experiment by certain bodies, may be said to have first assumed definite national form at the convention of the American Federation of Labor held in Chicago in 1893.

The history of the debate and action thereon, covering the intervening decade, constitutes perhaps the most important epoch in the labor movement of the present generation. Upon this presumption these events seem to justify more detailed and consecutive treatment than has as yet been accorded them. During the period covered by this paper the growth of organization among the workers in the United States has been phenomenal. The extent, character and circumstances of that growth have presented a great opportunity, and also a great danger. Speaking generally, it may be said that the labor movement has fairly well availed itself of the former and in the main avoided the latter of these situations.

Throughout the various crises of the decade, the American Federation of Labor has maintained the course that, as the results have frequently shown, is best calculated to conserve the true interests and continued progress of its own membership and of the industrial world at large. The disposition and power to maintain this attitude is due mainly to the long discussion of political action as a necessary or desirable adjunct, or complement, of trade-unionism.

At the Chicago convention a "political programme" was introduced. The discussion thereon shortly resolved itself into a proposal to refer the entire subject matter to the affiliated unions for "favorable consideration" and instructions to the next convention. A resolution to this effect, but with the word "favorable" stricken out, was adopted. When the convention met in Denver, in 1894, the "political programme" was again brought up for action.

The preamble of the programme was as follows:

WHEREAS, The trade-unionists of Great Britain have by the light of experience and the logic of progress, adopted the principle of independent labor politics as an auxiliary to their economic action, and

WHEREAS, Such action has resulted in the most gratifying success, and

WHEREAS, Such independent labor politics are based upon the following programme', to wit:

Mr. Adolph Strasser, a representative of the Cigarmakers' International Union and a leader of high intellectual attainments and wide knowledge of the economic and political activities of the workers throughout the world, moved

That the preamble be stricken out, being a misrepresentation of facts.

The debate on this motion centered upon the question as to how far the preamble misrepresented the action taken by the British Trade-Union Congress held in Belfast during the previous year. The prevailing opinion was that the action of the Belfast gathering was without warrant in the sentiment of its constituents, and had been repudiated by them. During the debate the author of the preamble admitted the comparatively slender basis of his claim in these words:

I simply want to say that, in the statement in the preamble, there is a sufficiency of truth to at least protect any man from being charged with bold misrepresentation.

Mr. Strasser's motion to strike out the preamble was adopted by a vote of 1,345 to 861, representing a membership of 134,500 to 86,100, respectively.<sup>1</sup>

The "political programme" here alluded to contained a number of planks, but the purpose of its mover and his supporters was embodied in a single one of these declarations, known as "Plank 10," which provided for "The collective ownership by the people of all means of production and distribution."

This was a plain declaration for Socialism, and was so regarded by its opponents and so admitted by its advocates throughout the debate upon it. However, it is characteristic of this and all

<sup>1</sup> Delegates to the convention of the American Federation of Labor cast one vote for each 100 members, or major fraction thereof, represented by them.

subsequent efforts to commit the American Federation of Labor to political action, that while the language of the proposals has studiously excluded the term "Socialism" (the term "political action *independent of the old parties*" being used in preference), its real object has been none the less apparent. Several amendments were introduced and discussed, and finally the convention adopted the following substitute:

The abolition of the monopoly system of land holding and the substitution therefor of a title of occupancy and use only.

"Plank 10," in the form finally adopted, was a victory of Single Tax sentiment over that of Socialism. A motion to adopt the planks "as a whole" was defeated, owing to a misunderstanding. However, the succeeding convention formally adopted the planks, not as a "political programme," but as "legislative demands!"<sup>2</sup>

Notwithstanding their defeat at the Denver Convention of 1894, and notwithstanding the action of that gathering was based upon presumably settled lines of trade-union policy, the delegates holding socialistic views upon political matters have persisted in the effort to secure an endorsement of these views from each succeeding convention of the Federation. The result has been uniformly the same in each instance, *i. e.*, refusal to pledge or advise the trade-unions to take part, as such, in any movement in the nature of partisan politics. The following table shows the result of the vote on the "Socialist Resolutions" at each convention during the past ten years:

Year	Convention City.	No. of Dels. Voting.	For Political Action.	No. of Dels. Voting.	Against Political Action.
1894	Denver.....	34	91,300	36	121,700
1895	New York.....	16	21,400	68	167,600
1896	Cincinnati.....	..	.....	...	.....
1897	Nashville.....	..	.....	...	.....
1898	Kansas City.....	..	.....	...	.....
1899	Detroit.....	..	.....	...	.....
1900	Louisville.....	42	68,500	111	416,900

<sup>2</sup> This convention also adopted a constitutional prohibition against the discussion of partisan political subjects.

TABLE—Continued<sup>a</sup>

1901	Scranton.....	..	.....	...	.....
1902	New Orleans.....	90	417,100	140	489,700
1903	Boston.....	65	214,700	299	1,128,200

These figures show that during the seven years from 1895 to 1901 (inclusive) the sentiment of the conventions was very strongly against political action. Five of the conventions held during that period disposed of the subject by *viva voce* vote. The vote taken at the New Orleans Convention of 1902 would indicate that sentiment had turned in favor of political action. The figures in this case afforded merely a surface indication, however. It is a feature common to all the votes that have been taken upon this question, that in the final alignment of the delegates a number have been actuated by secondary motives. This was especially the case at the New Orleans convention. On that occasion seven resolutions were introduced, all having political action as their expressed or implied purpose. These were reported back with a recommendation that the convention non-concur therein, and, instead, adopt a reaffirmation of the declaration, made by the preceding convention, that "our meetings, local and national, are now, and always have been, free to the discussion of any legitimate economic or political question, but, on the other hand, are equally pronounced against any partisan politics, religious discussions or race prejudices." To this report an amendment was offered, advising the working people "to organize their economic and political power to secure for labor the full equivalent of its toil and the overthrow of the wage system and the establishment of an industrial, co-operative democracy." The latter was, in turn, amended by a delegate

<sup>a</sup>Delegates to the convention of the American Federation of Labor cast "one vote for every one hundred members or major fraction thereof" represented by them. In the table two ciphers have been added to the tally of votes cast, for the purpose of approximating the total membership represented in each case. Delegates from city trades councils and State Federations cast but a single vote each, but as the number of such delegates is usually relatively small the inclusion of their votes under the rule here adopted does not materially affect the result attained. Usually a number of delegates have, for one reason or another, failed to vote. Again, the actual membership of the Federation is always considerably in excess of that represented at the conventions. For instance, at the Boston Convention of 1903—an unusually representative gathering—the number of delegates present was 496, while the number recorded as voting was but 364. The actual membership was estimated at 1,465,800, while the delegates voting represented but 1,342,900.

The majority vote in the New York Convention of 1895 expressed the sentiment that the failure of the Denver Convention of the previous year to adopt the "political programme" as a whole "was equivalent to a rejection and, therefore, we declare that the American Federation has no political platform." Immediately following this vote a motion was adopted, providing that "these resolutions (i. e., the planks adopted by the Denver Convention) be kept standing in the *American Federationist* as legislative demands."

representing the United Mine Workers, so as to strike out everything after the word "toil." This was accepted by the delegate who offered the first amendment, and thus the lines were merged. The political action amendment, having apparently been rendered innocuous by the proposal of the Mine Workers' delegate, received the vote of the delegates from the latter organization (representing a membership of 185,400) and also of many other delegates who upon a more definite presentation would have been recorded in opposition. The fact that, notwithstanding the misunderstanding in the New Orleans convention, the proposal in favor of political action failed of adoption by a considerable majority is significant of the powerful sentiment prevailing in the American Federation of Labor against such action.

However, the delegates of the Socialistic faith, and indeed the Socialists throughout the country, proclaimed the result of the vote at New Orleans as a victory for the principle of political action, presaging the "capture" of the Federation at an early date. These representations, although lacking any justification in the real facts of the case, had the effect of placing the labor movement in an equivocal position before the country. It was therefore determined, by common consent of the delegates in attendance at the Boston convention of 1903, that a decisive test should be made upon the issue, Politics versus Trade-Unionism. Ten resolutions of a political nature were introduced during the sessions at Boston. When these were reported back to the convention the committee briefly recommended unfavorable action. The custom on previous occasions had been to report some form of amendment to, or substitute for, the original resolutions, thus leaving the report itself open to amendment, with the resultant confusion of the issues. In this instance, the committee's object was, as announced by President Gompers, in ruling out a proposed substitute, to insure a clear understanding on both sides. This ruling of President Gompers was twice appealed from, and on both occasions it was sustained by a large majority, the convention thus expressing its acceptance of the lines of debate suggested by its presiding officer.

The discussion lasted nearly two days. The tone of debate was substantially the same as in former instances, although there was a more notable tendency on the part of many delegates to dis-

cuss the merits of Socialism and the attitude toward the American Federation of Labor of the individual Socialist inside and outside of the labor movement. Upon the whole, however, the debate was confined to the question as to whether the Federation should commit itself to political action on party lines or preserve its identity as a purely trade-union body.

The adoption of the committee's report against political action by a vote of 1,128,200 to 214,700 (the approximate membership represented by the delegates voting) may be regarded as demonstrating the result of ten years' constant and active agitation on the subject. Making every possible allowance for the uncertain quantities that enter into a calculation of this kind, there remains a reasonable assurance that the vote against political action represents at most the mean, rather than the maximum, of the sentiment on that score; whereas, the vote in favor of political action may be regarded as over rather than under the representation to which those holding that view are properly entitled. The nature of the subject and the circumstances of its discussion bear out this statement. Enthusiasm is proverbially and naturally the more prevalent among the aggressive minority in any conflict of arms or ideas. In any conflict involving a political issue the quality of enthusiasm is especially potent, since politics, being essentially a matter of faith, is largely a matter of individual leadership. In this view of the subject it may reasonably be assumed that the leaders of political action sentiment in the conventions of the American Federation of Labor have derived part of their support from men actuated by a spirit of admiration for their leadership rather than by a sense of conviction upon the merits of the ideas expounded by them.

The convention of the American Federation of Labor is, within the widest practicable limits, an absolutely free forum. "Programming" is unknown; debate follows the limits of latitude which the individual delegate chooses to impose upon himself, rather than the strict rules of parliamentary usage. These conditions insure a perfectly free discussion upon all questions; moreover, they enable the delegates to exploit their views by devices calculated to appeal to the wish rather than to the thought of their hearers.

On the whole, it is reasonably certain that the vote against political action is fairly representative of the sentiment prevail-

ing among the two million workers affiliated with the Federation. Taking into consideration the probable sentiment of the labor organizations unaffiliated with the latter body, the membership of which may be estimated at half a million, and deducing their views upon this subject from the fact of their conservatism in other connections, it follows that the vote here noted falls considerably short of recording the full strength of the opposition to political action among the trade-unions of the United States.

The position of the American Federation of Labor, as gathered from its records, is that, while rejecting the proposal of political action by the trade-unions, as fundamentally opposed to the proper purpose of these bodies, it favors discussion and action upon legislative lines. In other words, it seeks to secure favorable legislation from the existing legislative bodies without reference to their political make-up, leaving to the individual trade-unionist, in his capacity as a citizen, the duty of voting as his experience and judgment dictate and, if need be, of organizing with his fellows for the attainment of political ends. As a guide to the trade-unions in seeking legislation and as a means of concentrating their efforts upon points of common agreement, the Federation has declared for certain measures, not as in the nature of a "political programme," but simply and specifically as "legislative demands." These measures, as adopted at the Denver convention of 1894, are as follows:

#### LEGISLATIVE DEMANDS.

1. Compulsory education.
2. Direct legislation through the initiative and referendum.
3. A legal workday of not more than eight hours.<sup>4</sup>
4. Sanitary inspection of workshop, mine and home.
5. Liability of employers for injury to health, body and life.
6. Abolition of the contract system on all public works.
7. Abolition of the sweatshop.
8. Municipal ownership of street-cars, water works and gas and electric light plants for public distribution of light and heat.
9. Nationalization of telegraph, telephones, railroads and mines.
10. Abolition of the monopoly system of land holding and the substitution therefor of a title of occupancy and use only.
11. Repeal of all conspiracy and penal laws affecting seamen and other workmen, incorporated in the Federal laws of the United States.
12. Abolition of the monopoly privilege of issuing money and substituting therefor a system of direct issuance to and by the people.

<sup>4</sup> This provision is intended to cover public works only, as in the case of the National Eight-Hour Law.



The adoption of these declarations did not impose upon the affiliated bodies any obligation to depart from the purely trade-union sphere of action. Such obligation as is involved is predicated upon the indorsement of the declarations by the individual unions. This point was made quite clear by President Gompers at the Denver convention, when, in reply to a question designed to elicit an authoritative and definite expression on the subject, he said:<sup>5</sup>

The American Federation of Labor is a voluntary organization; the resolutions or platforms adopted by it at its convention are expressive of the consensus of opinion of the majority of the organized workers affiliated with it. The resolutions and platforms adopted by it cannot be *imposed* upon any affiliated organization against its wishes, but they are presumed to be observed by all organizations.

The position of the Federation in respect to the question of political action is further exemplified by that feature of its constitution which bears thereon, which reads as follows:<sup>6</sup>

Party politics, whether they be Democratic, Republican, Socialistic, Populist, Prohibition, or any other, shall have no place in the conventions of the American Federation of Labor.

Upon all questions of policy affecting the American labor movement the example of the British trade-unionists is an important consideration. Especially is this true with regard to the question of political policy, since it is to that example that the exponent of political action on the part of the American trade-unions most frequently refers in justification of his views. It is, therefore, of interest to note the current tendency in this connection of the trade-unionists of Great Britain. An American publicist, writing from London, under recent date, says:<sup>7</sup>

No statistics are in existence giving the exact strength of the labor movement here. If London were as well organized as is Chicago, its trade societies would contain a membership of 750,000; at best I can count only 135,000. The London Trades Council has a membership of 57,601, with an income of \$3,357, of which \$280 was last year spent for the aid of labor candidates, and about \$1,000 for officers' salaries. But London is divided into two cities and twenty-seven boroughs, and some of these have trade councils of their own. Active political centers of influence are these trade councils, and it sometimes seemed to me that the political side of the labor movement had greater attractions for the members than did the matter of hours of labor and wages.

<sup>5</sup> Official proceedings, A. F. of L. Convention, Denver, 1894.

<sup>6</sup> Constitution of the American Federation of Labor, Art. III, Sec. 8.

<sup>7</sup> Judson Grenell, London, June 4, 1904.

Every prominent labor man has his eye upon Parliament. He desires an official position in his union, for it is the natural stepping-stone to becoming a Councilman or an Alderman for a borough, from whence he naturally steps into an official position in the County Council. Then he is ready to stand for some Parliamentary district, which needs not be the one in which he resides. He is free to select any constituency, and as strong men are sought after, a man who has made a good record in subordinate political positions is sought after in close districts, in the hope that the weight of his popularity may help to overcome the opposition.

These observations suggest that the poor state of industrial organization among the London workers is either the effect of the condition under which office in a trade-union is regarded as the "natural stepping-stone" to political office, or that the comparative lack of interest among the workers in the matter of hours of labor and wages is the cause of personal political activity among the workers' representatives. The situation prevailing among the London workers, as here described, is typical of that existing among American workers in all similar circumstances. Throughout the United States the growth and effectiveness of the trade-union is generally in inverse ratio to its political activity, or to the political activity of those intrusted with the administration of its affairs.

To quote further from the same source:<sup>8</sup>

It has often been asked: What will workingmen do if they ever obtain full political power? Battersea, a city of 171,000 inhabitants, a borough of London, and the home of John Burns, from which he is regularly returned to Parliament, answers this question in part. Here the organized labor element "runs things," electing two-thirds of the administrative and legislative officials and using their power to the fullest extent possible for those objects for which trade-unions and governments are supposed to exist.

The platform upon which, presumably, the political efforts of the organized workers of Battersea are centered stands for these objects: Public baths, public wash houses, workingmen's homes, sterilized milk for infants, public gymnasium and billiard rooms, electric lighting for public and private use, workshops for making building and road material, public lavatories, public libraries, workshop inspection, waterworks to supply the public baths, labor bureau.

These are not trade-union objects, but social objects. They are objects for the attainment of which "governments are supposed

<sup>8</sup> Judson Grenell, Battersea (London), June 1, 1904.

to exist;" but they are not objects which can properly occupy the chief attention of a trade-union. With the exception of the demands for "workshops for making building and road materials," "workshop inspection," and "labor bureau," the platform in question contains nothing of interest especially and peculiarly to the workers, as such: certainly, it contains nothing of immediate personal interest to the workers of any particular craft. It is a platform in which the public at large is, or ought to be, interested, and for the attainment of which the public should organize. To say that the organized labor element "runs things"—having in mind the things here noted—is to suggest that it is neglecting the things which it ought to run, that it is letting these things run themselves or leaving them to be run by other elements.

In judging the work of organized labor it is not sufficient that that work is in line with those objects for which governments are supposed to exist, or with those objects concerning which most men are agreed in theory. The prime test of organized labor consists, not in the record of its public activities, not in the record of what it has forced from the government in the way of legislation, but in the record of what it has forced from the employer in the way of higher wages, shorter hours and improved working conditions generally—in short, in the record of that which only a trade-union can do, of that which no government can do, of that which even the best government ought not to attempt to do. It is by this test that the student must judge the causes of the strength or weakness of trade-union sentiment among the workers in any craft or locality, as it is by this test that the workers themselves judge the trade-union and decide whether or not it is of use to them.

An organization of workers may accomplish much good in social and political ways, yet may be a trade-union in name only—may, indeed, be a complete failure in all the essential requirements of trade-unionism. There is no necessary connection between social legislation and industrial reform. Indeed, to judge by the more conspicuous instances of governmental concern for the welfare of the working class it would appear that a low wage rate and a long workday are natural concomitants of these forms of paternalism. Whether it be attributable to coincidence or to cause, a fact of common observation is that in many localities in which ultra-progressive methods of govern-

ment prevail there also prevails a low standard of industrial conditions. The advocate of political action by the American trade-union cites the example of those organizations in Europe which by their activity in political affairs have compelled the enactment of much "reform" legislation, meanwhile ignoring the more important point that in their devotion to these measures the organizations in question have abandoned all concern for the immediate and primary conditions of labor. To this the opponents of political action reply by citing the record of the American trade-union in the matter of increasing wages, reducing the length of the workday and numerous other improvements in the conditions under which labor is performed—improvements unknown to the European worker or known to him only in his dreams of political regeneration—and which make more immediately and more fundamentally toward the comfort and independence of the individual worker than any political or legislative measure can possibly do. In principle there is little or no difference between the public and the private measure of social or domestic reform; the principle in each case is essentially eleemosynary; the ultimate effect to be anticipated in each case is the same. The workers who regard with suspicion the philanthropy of the individual employer may, and in fact do, regard with equal distrust the philanthropy of the government, inspired, as both systems are, by the same mistaken conception of the workers' real needs and by the same disposition to overlook the causes of poverty and degradation, and having the same significance in the sum of things. The fact that these measures of public philanthropy are secured through the agency of the workers' organizations does not alter their character, does not make them more palatable nor redeem them in any degree from the error upon which they are based. That fact merely commits the labor organization to responsibility for the false conception of the principles of industrial reform, and to that extent weakens the labor organization in the esteem of those who should, and who in the end must, depend upon it for any real and permanent redress.

The Battersea platform declares for certain social or public reforms as the primary and essential objects of the body supporting it; whereas, the platform of the American Federation of Labor, in declaring for similar objects, also declares that these are secondary and incidental to the real business of trade-unionism. This differ-

ence of conception regarding the fundamental purpose of the platform leads the Battersea trade-unionists into politics and keeps the American trade-unionists within the sphere of trade-unionism. The immediate result of this difference is seen in the difference between the political club and the trade-union; its final result is seen in the difference between the poorly organized condition of the workers in London and the well organized condition of the workers in the average American city.

It is apparent that the comparative lack of trade-union interest among the London workers is the effect of undue political activity on the part of those already organized or their representatives. The statement that every prominent labor man in London regards official position in his union as the "natural stepping-stone" to political office contains in itself ample explanation of a lack of interest in trade-unionism. The trade-union official who seeks political office is the bane of the labor movement. The trade-union which adopts the policy of political action makes political ambition inevitable on the part of its officials. Devotion to the proper business of trade-unionism on the part of its representatives is essential to the success of a trade-union, as it is essential to the respect and confidence of its members and their fellow-craftsmen. It follows, of course, that the trade-union which would secure and retain the services of efficient and devoted men must guard against imposing upon its officers any duties or obligations of a political nature.

There can be no intermediate form of organization between the trade-union and the political club. No form of organization can combine trade-unionism and politics. The trade-union can not "go into politics" and remain a trade-union; if it would remain a trade-union it must keep out of politics; if it takes political action it must become to all intents and purposes a political body. The trade-union, by strict adherence to its proper functions, may raise wages, shorten the workday and effect numerous other improvements in the conditions of labor; but, in the view of those who insist upon political action, these results are, after all, merely "palliatives," unworthy the dignity and deserts of the sovereign masses, and not to be compared with the beneficent and wholesale reforms obtainable by the simple process of organizing for one great "strike at the ballot-box"! Even admitting the power of the government to accomplish these ends,

the condition precedent to the exercise of that power, namely, practical unanimity among the workers upon questions of political principle and policy, is an impossibility, a fact of which the advocates of political action are themselves a sufficient proof, since dissension and division are notoriously the common features of their political activities. The only point upon which there is any unanimity among the men who hold these views is that of hostility, overt or covert, to trade-unionism. The adoption of political action by the trade-unions by removing the only ground of common agreement among their critics, within the labor movement, would inevitably result in splitting the latter into as many parties or factions as there are men in that movement ambitious of leadership and capable of commanding a following.

The proponents of political action hold that labor's wrongs arise from a two-fold source, industrial and political; that the organization of labor, to be fully effective, must use the political weapon of the ballot as well as, and in preference to, the economic weapon of the strike; that the effort to reform the conditions of labor by economic methods exclusively is a failure, and that the trade-union, being already well established in the field of economic effort, should enter the political field.

The opponents of political action take the ground that political matters can be dealt with only by political organizations; that labor organizations, to be effective at all, must confine themselves to labor matters; that the purely economic policy of the trade-unions, so far from being a failure, is a success the proofs of which are visible in every step of the workers' progress, and that the trade-union which enters the political field simply sacrifices whatever immediate good it may be capable of, without accomplishing anything of promise for the future.

The records of the labor movement contain numerous instances of failure and destruction directly traceable to intervention in political affairs, while they contain no instance of real and permanent advantage due to that cause. This record, while generally admitted by those who favor political action, is variously ascribed to party blunder and individual dishonesty, causes which, it would seem, are very largely inherent in the nature of the subject. At any rate, the facts go to prove that the mere talk of organizing the workers so that

they shall "vote as one man" is dangerous to the trade-union which indulges in it. Wherever talk of that kind has reached the point of realization it has resulted in undermining the spirit of unity, upon which, more than upon mere numbers, the trade-union must depend in those tests of physical endurance and personal loyalty to which it must inevitably be subjected.

There can be no gainsaying the wisdom of the policy adopted and adhered to by the American Federation of Labor and other successful labor organizations, namely, the exclusion from the affairs of trade-unionism of all matters upon which men are more inclined to divide than to unite. The trade-union grows out of the trade interest; so long as it is controlled by that interest it is a body whose elements are cohesive and whose power is concentrated. The trade-union controlled otherwise than by the immediate interests of its members is a mass of incongruous elements, without power, precision or permanency. The trade-union which is organized upon the basis of common agreement among the workers concerning the conditions of labor in a given industry, and which adheres to that basis, is capable of improving these conditions to an extent proportioned mainly to its own numbers, intelligence and devotedness. In the end it is improvement of this kind that tells in the progress of labor generally. The prime usefulness of the trade-union consists not in the power to elect public officials or to secure legislation, but in the power to improve the immediate and personal conditions under which labor is performed, to increase wages, to reduce hours, to make "shop rules," to maintain a measure of equality in the terms of contract between employer and employee, to interpose an alleviating influence between master and man, and generally to do those things which only a trade-union can do, which the trade-union must do if they are to be done at all.

The fundamental error upon which political action is based consists in crediting government with the power to solve the problems that now affect the relations between employer and employee. So long as the people exercise the controlling influence in government, the wisdom of the latter can not rise above that of the people themselves, nor can its powers exceed those delegated to it by the people. Upon the theory that lies at the root of a government of limited powers, to wit, that in the people resides the source of all authority,

it is obvious that no government can be wise enough or strong enough to do for its constituents that which the latter are not wise enough or strong enough to do for themselves. To question these principles is to question the power—nay, the right—of the people to govern themselves. The theory of governmental control in the industrial relations of the people, while logical enough in its origin—that is, in European conceptions of government—is directly opposed to the genius of American institutions. Precisely as the American citizen leads in the political conception of government, as an agency restricted to the performance of certain more or less clearly defined functions of a public nature so the American worker leads in the industrial conception of trade-unionism, as an agency which, both of right and of necessity, must discharge the functions appertaining to the industrial phase of society.

The psychological basis of the sentiment for political action is to be found in that intellectual despair to which all men are momentarily subject in their treatment of problems which press for solution but which defy all known formulas. Where instinct commands and reason fails the disposition to appeal to extrinsic sources of aid becomes strong. The attitude of the American trade-unionist is that of appeal to the spirit of independence and to a realization of the truth that the workers are themselves the sole repository of power to better their lot.

The solemn lesson of history, to-day and every day of our lives, is that the workers must depend upon themselves for the improvement of the conditions of labor. Their power inheres in labor, not in the ballot; it is the power to produce, and, in the last analysis, the power to stop production. To conserve and concentrate that power is the first and last duty of trade-unionism. The forces that dominate society are physical, not intellectual. The labor problem cannot be solved by rule and formula; it can only be solved through constant labor and more or less continual suffering. You can not solve the labor problem by the ballot, nor by the bullet. As well might you try to appease hunger by the intellectual process of reading a menu or by the physical process of destroying the palate!

W. MACARTHUR.

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